

REAGAN INSISTS AID TO REBELS IS LEGAL

Continued From Page A1

lines which are supplying the guerrillas in El Salvador.

At the United Nations, diplomats said Nicaragua had indicated a possible softening of position in saying that it would be willing to discuss regional aspects of the dispute but that its first priority remained immediate concerns about Honduras.

In fielding questions about Mr. Boland's charge, President Reagan simply questioned whether he and other critics had been "misled" by various news accounts from Central America regarding United States aid to the Nicaraguan rebels.

Asked about the American public's reaction, Mr. Reagan said: "I think that when they pay a little more attention to this, they're going to find out we're not violating the law."

Asked about assertions from Administration officials that Cuba or the Soviet Union might introduce new aircraft or even Cuban troops into the Nicaragua dispute, the President at first declined to comment.

"I only know that the possibility does exist because the Soviet Union, by way of Cuba, has been engaged already," he then said. "Both of them openly hailed Nicaragua as the first Communist country on the mainland of the Western Hemisphere," he added.

Mr. Boland's charge of covert Administration aid was supported Wednesday by eight members of a fact-finding group that recently returned from the area. The group, headed by two House members, contended that the Administration was "deeply involved" in helping the guerrillas.



Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Eenders arrived early to prepare to testify before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He was questioned on Administration policy in Nicaragua and other Latin American countries.

The President, however, noted that Senator Barry Goldwater, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he had found no violations of "the letter or the spirit of the law" by the Central Intelligence Agency.

"We are complying with the law — the Boland Amendment, which is the law," the President declared.

The Administration's policy in Central American has been under growing Congressional criticism. But the President called for a clearer "perspective" about the struggle in Latin America.

"Nicaragua today has created the biggest military force in all of Central America and large parts of South America," he said, "an army of some 25,000 backed by a militia of 50,000 armed with Soviet weapons that consist

of heavy-duty tanks, an air force, helicopter gunships, fighter planes, bombers and so forth."

"I think that people should understand some of these things," Mr. Reagan said, looking forth to television cameras broadcasting his remarks. "And ask themselves what is the need for them having the biggest army in all of the region."

In an interview this week, General Garcia firmly denied that he will resign. But even as he spoke, Col. Juan Rafael Bustillo, the chief of the Air Force, was completing his plans to challenge the authority of the Defense Minister if he does not resign by Friday.

Commander's Political Skill
The 48-year-old Air Force commander, who has the full support of his officers, said in an interview on Wednesday that the Air Force could refuse to recognize the authority of General Garcia if he refuses to step down by Friday.

His ability to retain his position, mili-

Salvadoran Test of Wills

Campaign to Oust Defense Minister Builds Into Crisis Involving Air Force Commander

By LYDIA CHAVEZ

Special to The New York Times

SAN SALVADOR, April 14 — The measure of his own political skill, and the difficulty of the country's provisional president has had in finding an acceptable successor.

Colonel Bustillo, described by officials as a "patriot" and an "excellent" commander who is politically to the right of the Defense Minister, believes that if major changes are not made soon the war situation will continue to deteriorate. Military sources said he has agonized for weeks over his decision to challenge the Defense Minister's authority and that he views it as his patriotic duty to take decisive action against General Garcia.

What form his challenge will take is unclear. Military and political sources said Colonel Bustillo could cut communications with the headquarters of the armed forces, and begin to manage the war from his office at the Ilopango Airport, which is on the outskirts of the capital.

Degree of Support Unclear
Historically, field commanders in El Salvador have kept in close contact with the Air Force, and the Air Force, in turn, has passed on the information to the high command in San Salvador.

Military officials said the war room at Ilopango is far more comprehensive than the same room at the Armed Forces headquarters. "They have nothing compared to the Air Force," said one military source who has spent time at both places.

It is unclear what support Colonel Bustillo has among other commanders. The colonel said he has not sought any support, and no commanders could be reached for comment. The colonel commands 1,500 men including about 60 officers.

American and Salvadoran officials are hoping that Colonel Bustillo's threat to disregard the Defense Minister's authority will be enough to persuade the provisional President Alvaro Magaña that it is time to ask for the Defense Minister's resignation, or at least to demand changes in the military command.

Many Crises for Garcia
General Garcia, the last military officer from the 1979 junta to participate in Government, has managed to ride through so many crises that some officials are betting that he will once again salvage his job by agreeing to make changes in the departmental commanders.

One military officer said that once Colonel Bustillo makes his ultimatum, there will likely be a meeting of the high command that will result in "compromises" from all of the parties.

One of the problems in the crisis is that a successor acceptable to the United States, rightist Salvadoran politicians and moderate forces here has been difficult to find.

The name mentioned most frequently is that of Colonel Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, the director of the National Guard. However, Colonel Vides has been reluctant to take a position that will last only until the presidential elections in December, according to a Salvadoran lawyer who knows him well.

Honduran Embassy Bombed
BOGOTA, Colombia, April 14 (AP) — A bomb exploded at the Honduran Embassy today, wounding the consul and his secretary, the police said. The consul, Felipe Parades, was in serious condition at a Bogota hospital, a diplomatic source said, asking not to be identified. The secretary's condition was not known.

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Transcript of President Reagan's Remarks to News Reporters

Following is a transcript of President Reagan's statement yesterday in Washington on the confirmation of Kenneth L. Adelman as head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, followed by an exchange with reporters, as recorded by The New York Times:

OPENING STATEMENT

I am deeply gratified by the United States Senate's confirmation today of Ambassador Kenneth Adelman to be director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. It's my earnest hope that this positive step will mark the beginning of a new bipartisan consensus on the vital issue of nuclear arms reduction. I'm convinced that Kenneth Adelman will prove that the confidence which the Senate has expressed in him today is well-founded. Under his leadership we can look forward to a reinvigorated Arms Control and Disarmament Agency that will make an important contribution to our arms reduction efforts.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Insurgents in Nicaragua

Q. Mr. President, are we directly or indirectly supplying arms to insurgent forces — Nicaraguan insurgents? And if so, why?

A. We are complying with the law — the Boland Amendment, which is the law — we're complying with that fully.

Arms or Supplies

Q. Does that mean we are not arming or supplying any of the dissidents along the border — the Honduran border?

A. I am not going to get into — I could not and would not possibly talk about such things. But may I point out that this whole controversy over Nicaragua is ignoring some realities — that the Nicaraguan Government is revolutionary Government that took power by force, but with the promise of democratic elections, none of which have taken place, and all of this was under the previous Administration.

The previous Administration, however, did recognize this Government of Nicaragua, sought to help it with considerable financial aid and withdrew that aid long before we were here when it became apparent that the Government had become completely Marxist, had turned away and thrown out some of the democratic groups that had supported them and fought with them in the revolution to bring democracy to Nicaragua, and were then no longer a part of the Government. But also the cutoff of funds was because the Nicaraguan Government had pledged to the United States that it would not attempt to overthrow any other governments in Central America, particularly El Salvador, by helping the insurgents there — the guerrillas — and they violated that promise. And they are still violating it.

And anything that we are doing in that area is simply trying to redirect the guerrillas in El Salvador. But the picture today is that Nicaragua, with its protests that somehow someone is trying to overthrow them — it is, as a revolutionary Government, is trying to overthrow the Government of a neighboring country, El Salvador, which was a duly-elected Government, and which is going to hold another election before this year is out.

Boland Statement

Q. But Mr. President, what is the American public to think if Congressman Boland, who as you know is chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, says there's very strong evidence that we are violating the law? How do we clear this with the American people? Don't they have a reason, if a Congressman is saying that we're violating the law?

A. Well, maybe some of you people misled him.

Access to Intelligence

Q. No, but he has access to

As we seek equitable and verifiable agreements with the Soviet Union to reduce the arsenals and the risks of war, we will need the advice and support of the Congress. I'm confident that with full consultation with Congress and the development of our arms reduction initiative, the United States can continue to be a force for genuine peace and progress in the world. And if we're met with reciprocal seriousness of purpose from the Soviet Union, 1983 can be a year of historic importance in securing a more solid and stable peace through arms reductions. Heben?

For the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan Government?

A. We are not doing anything to try and overthrow the Nicaraguan Government. As a matter of fact, let's put that in perspective for a moment.

Nicaragua today has created the biggest military force in all of Central America and large parts of South America — an army of some 25,000 backed by a militia of 50,000 armed with Soviet weapons that consist of heavy-duty tanks, an air force, helicopter gunships, fighter planes, bombers and so forth, heavy artillery and a few thousand Marxist Indians and guerrillas. I don't think it's reasonable to assume that that kind of a force couldn't nurse any ambitions that they can overthrow that Government with that great military force. And I think that people should understand some of these things and ask themselves what is the need for them having the biggest army in all of the region.

We are cooperating with the other Central American countries in the region to try and bring democracy and peace to Central America.

Soviet Aircraft

Q. Mr. President, this morning your Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Mr. Eenders, told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that there was a possibility Cuba or the Soviet Union may introduce high-performance aircraft or even Cuban troops into Nicaragua. Do you have any information about any impending possibility of this, and if so, what would be the American response to that move?

A. Well, no, I think I'm not going to answer a hypothetical question with a hypothetical answer. And I only know that that possibility does exist because the Soviet Union, by way of Cuba, has been engaged already —

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